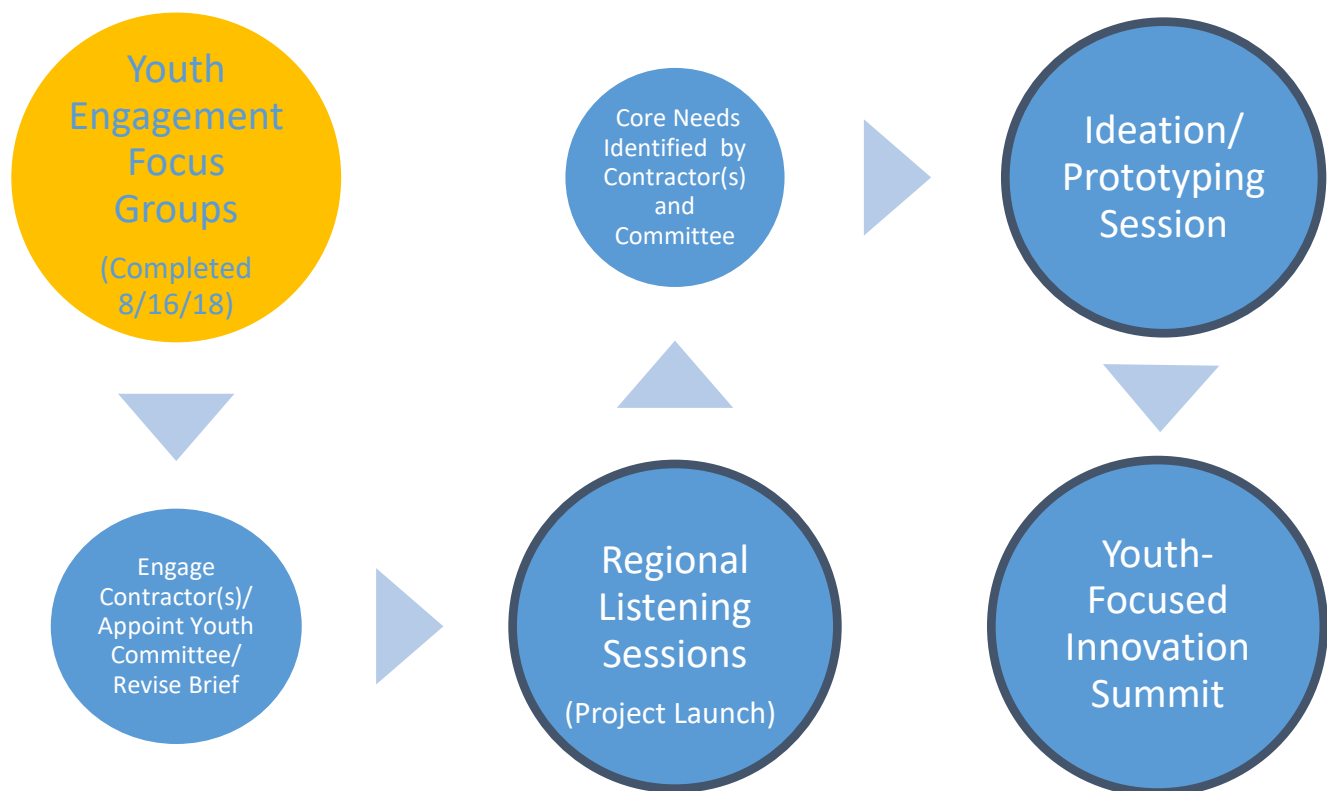


Project Background

In May 2018, under the leadership of Vice Chair Khatera Aslami-Tamplen, the Commission proposed to launch a Youth Innovation Project to support the development of youth-led proposals for innovation. To ensure that the project is inclusive of youth voices, the Commission conducted pre-project focus groups with youth leaders. These sessions provided an inclusive space for youth to give input into the development of the project, including: the recruitment of a Youth Committee; a framework for listening sessions, ideation sessions and a summit; and the language used to identify all aspects of the project.

The project proposal begins with the development of a Youth Committee that will provide input regarding the project timeline and support project facilitation, which includes the following three goals, accomplished in a phased process: (1) identify challenges facing youth, (2) identify potential solutions to those challenges, and (3) present the solutions to county leaders for innovation investment. The following diagram illustrates the phased process:



Milestones

In June 2018, the Commission entered into a contract with the California Youth Connection to provide logistical support to transition age youth leaders to prepare for and attend events related to the Youth Innovation Project.

In July 2018 and August 2018, two youth engagement focus groups were held in Humboldt and Fresno counties in collaboration with county staff, local organizations, and the California Youth Connection. Vice Chair Aslami-Tamplen and Commission staff facilitated the two focus groups with youth leaders from Fresno, Humboldt, Trinity, and Shasta counties.

Focus Group Results

Participants were asked to share project-specific feedback on effective communication strategies and meaningful engagement, how to capture youth voice and vision, and how to support youth leadership. A list of the feedback received is provided below.

Agenda at a Glance

Welcome and Icebreaker

Focus Group Topics:

1. Meaningful Engagement
2. Effective Communication
3. Youth Leadership
4. Project Brief Feedback

Effective Communication/Meaningful Engagement

- Use of social media – Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook Messenger/Events
- Use group text functions – i.e. GroupMe
- Text reminders day before
- Email updates
- Flyers
- Use communication channels for recruitment and applications
- Create network of partnering organizations
- Use of conference calls to get info out
- Outreach through schools (all schools) and clinics – emphasis on rural community partners
- Outreach to juvenile justice involved youth
- Webinars
- Conduct focus groups in rural areas and have them report to individuals and groups “high up the ladder”
- Flexible spaces encourage engagement
- Smaller group sessions for information gathering, larger groups for idea building
- Consistent, ongoing, regular access to high levels of leadership
- Relationship building is important, and encourage more youth-centered events to engage at all levels
- Use of petitions/surveys to gather info on mental health needs and services in rural areas
- Quarterly retreats
- TAY representatives in leadership serve as role-models
- Create and maintain safe space for youth – reassure that what they are experiencing is ok and that they are not alone (space and time for their narrative to be heard)
- Court Appointed Special Advocates, Independent Living Program, California Youth Connection, and the Associated Student Body all have models that empower youth voice
- Use of hotlines and groups to support young people
- Consistent communication & follow up
- Ensure diversity of people communicating about project
- Look at creation of a communication structure outside of Committee (i.e. use of surveys) to float ideas for state-wide and regional support and buy-in

Focus Group Results (Continued)

Youth Leadership

Committee size/makeup

- Diverse representation of race/ethnicity
- Inclusion of rural youth
- Size of the group not as important as the makeup, diversity, and regional representation
- Look at California Youth Connection structure for engagement for Continuum of Care Reform
- Representation from each county
- Regional delegates

Leadership supports

- Create space for pre-meetings and adequate preparation before events
- Allow/support youth to facilitate committee meetings
- Allow/support youth to lead listening sessions
- Provide translator/mentor to act as an ambassador to help youth leaders explain the mental health system

Supplemental Supports

- Compensation for travel, time
- In-person or conference call/webinar meetings

Recruitment

- Through schools (all schools)
- Distribute applications through local CBO and non-profits working with youth
- Recruit from listening sessions
- Targeted outreach to populations not represented in first pool of applications

- Allow creative applications, not just standard essay and resume
- Create special social media page for the

Key Takeaways

- Services for youth, designed by youth
- Develop a youth engagement “tool kit” for county use
- Accountability that youth suggestions are followed

project

Criteria

- Lived experience
- Comfortable talking about mental health
- Emphasis on those who are looking to get involved/make a difference in the community
- Use scoring process to ensure diversity

Additional Discussions to Explore Further

- Considerations for how youth will be empowered to lead and provide guidance
- How Commission will ensure diversity and representation
- Ensure multiple outreach strategies and methods
- Be mindful of language – i.e. youth-led vs youth-informed
- Provide clear definitions, expectations, guidelines and process

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- Youth should be empowered and supported to lead conversation; adults should be there to support and listen, not direct
- Youth representation and messages about youth delivered by youth
- Training opportunities for youth to train service providers
- “Real-talk” from decision makers
- Create a collaboration within existing agencies to collect ideas and innovations regionally to send delegates to state representatives

Next Steps

Recruit and Appoint the Youth Committee:

Based on feedback received from the focus groups and recognizing the Commission’s limited capacity,

Born This Way Foundation

Born This Way Foundation is committed to supporting the wellness of young people and empowering them to create a kinder and braver world. To achieve these goals, Born This Way Foundation leverages evidence-based programming and authentic partnerships in order to work with young people to build kinder communities and improve mental health resources.

The Foundation strives to raise awareness of the importance of mental and emotional health, decrease stigma, and provide young people with better access to quality resources that meet their unique needs. Born This Way Foundation operates with guidance from their Youth Advisory Board.

<https://bornthisway.foundation/>

the Commission explored potential partners to support the first step of the Youth Innovation Project. The Commission looked for evidence that potential partners had the following skill sets: (a) mission aligned with the core principles of the Mental Health Services Act, including a focus on reducing disparities; (b) experience appointing a Youth Advisory Board/Committee; and (c) a culture of empowering youth. Born This Way Foundation was identified as an initial partner who met the desired qualifications and can engage, recruit for and appoint a diverse Youth Committee and also provide support for the listening sessions.

Identify Additional Partners:

The Youth Committee will be asked to look into options for contracting and provide input on the selection process. Commission staff anticipates needing additional support from outside partners to support the project to completion and will work with the Committee to engage California’s diverse, youth-focused organizations and foundations.

Several youth leaders recommended the Youth Leadership Institute as a potential partner for this project and members may choose to have the Institute present their ideas of how they can support the

ideation session and final Innovation Summit. The Youth Leadership Institute's mission is to build communities where young people and their adult allies come together to create positive social change. For more information, please visit: <http://yli.org/>.

Community Engagement Events:

In addition to selecting contractors to support the project, the Youth Committee will be asked to support the next phases of the project. Draft descriptions of the three (3) proposed events are provided below and may be edited by the Committee.

Listening Sessions. The Commission will work with the Youth Committee and partners to convene a series of youth-focused, regional listening sessions. These may be at Commission sponsored meetings or at independently organized events that are youth-focused. These listening sessions will provide an opportunity for the Commission to engage with youth across the state in a safe and youth-friendly space.

Information gathered at the listening sessions will be distilled down to identify a series of priority issues/challenges. Recognizing resource and time constraints, the Youth Committee will be asked to focus on no more than three. These priority issues/challenges will be explored in the next phase of the project.

Ideation Design Sessions. Following the identification of priority challenges, the Commission will sponsor ideation sessions where youth and allies will design innovative solutions that can be presented to county leaders as potential innovation projects. Like the listening sessions, the Youth Committee will help facilitate these ideation sessions.

Youth-Focused Innovation Summit. The culmination of the engagement period and ideation phase will be a Youth-Focused Innovation Summit. The goal for this event is to present youth-developed innovation plans to county leaders and community partners. Attendees will represent a diverse group of young people, county leaders, community providers and other public and private partners. The Youth Committee will support the development of this event.

Summary

The Commission completed the Youth Engagement Focus Groups and will now work with contractor(s) to appoint the Youth Committee to officially launch the project.

Through this project, youth leaders will be supported to elevate youth voice and vision at the local and state level as they develop innovative solutions to the unmet mental health needs facing youth statewide.

